

Experts - How do you Advertise?

Recently I had the opportunity to be involved in an in-depth discussion and survey of experts regarding the best forms of advertising. While hardly a scientific survey, the comments and results were extremely interesting.

Referral and listing services such as Forensics, TASA, JurisPro, HG Experts and others were mentioned. These services differ in how they charge experts. Some charge an annual fee to be listed in their database and some add a fee to the client who hires you through their service. The results were mixed. Approximately 70% of the experts favored services such as these. Some had very good experiences and some did not. For this expert the use of referral and listing services is a great form of exposure and an asset to my practice. These services receive thousands of hits or visits by attorneys looking for qualified experts. The cost is minimal compared to the amount of exposure and potential leads you can receive.

The next topic was print advertising such as post cards, newsletters, ads in law journals and alike. To my surprise the vast majority of experts did not participate in this type of advertising. The main reasons given for this was cost and time. Many experts felt the return on their investment was too small. More importantly, they believed the time it took to compose the advertising, create artwork, label and mail advertising was simply too time-consuming. I for one participate in each and every form of advertising mentioned. A regular marketing plan to your target audience can pay huge dividends. Admittedly, I use and depend on a marketing professional for this purpose.

The discussion then turned into advertising your service. Many of the experts had a guarded view of advertising. The most common concern was how to answer questions by opposing counsel about expert advertising. I was reminded of a piece I read not long ago in which a professional in expert marketing - Rosalie Hamilton, the Expert's Expert on Marketing, <http://www.expertcommunications.com/>, said -

(Excerpt)

If you are concerned about how you will look when answering questions about marketing your expert services, remember that the attorney grilling you is probably listed in local, state, and national bar association publications; Martindale-Hubbell(c) attorney directory; local, state, and national legal magazines and newspapers; the Yellow Pages; and his child's athletic booster directory. As was the judge when he practiced law as an attorney!

Here are a few examples of questions you might encounter and suggestions of possible answers (Note: This is not a consecutive line of questioning):

Q: Do you advertise your expert witness services? A: Yes, I do.

Q: You're available to testify for pay, and are willing to say whatever the attorney asks you to say; isn't that correct? (compound question)

A: I am paid for my time and expertise in reviewing the case and to testify, if necessary, in deposition or court. What I say is my own opinion based on the facts of the case.

Q: Your opinion is for sale, isn't that so?

A: No, I base my opinion on the facts of the case and am paid for my time in reviewing the case and testifying about that opinion.

Lastly, the discussion focused on websites. The vast majority of experts do have a website. However, less than fifty percent of them had their website built by a professional designer or website design firm. After visiting several expert websites, I must say there were some that were very well done; many of them, however, are in great need of reworking and design. They are cluttered with unnecessary graphics, do not utilize white space, and are not inviting to the eye.

More and more attorneys are turning to the Internet using Google or Yahoo search sites to find experts. It is vital to an expert's practice that their website is pleasing, effective and professional. A poorly constructed website will not entice an attorney to call you.

What makes a great website? "Focus and clarity of purpose." "A great website is unpretentious. It doesn't pretend to be what it is not. It never wastes your time because it always gets to the point. A great website helps the visitor to act." Gerry McGovern -

http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2004/nt_2004_02_02_ms.htm

The days of simply hanging out a shingle (sign, for those not familiar with the phrase) are gone. You need consistent and effective advertising. Create a marketing plan and advertising budget (no matter how small) that includes Internet, print ads in legal journals, and an effective website. Target your audience and divide your budget to cover the major classifications of advertising. Utilize all the tools available. In real estate it is said, sales are based on "location, location, location." In advertising it is "exposure, exposure, exposure."

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